

# Ozark

National Scenic Riverways



Superintendent Bill Black

Monday, December 22, 2014

## Riverways Reflections

I must admit to having mixed feelings as I write my last "Riverways Reflections" column as the superintendent of Ozark National Scenic Riverways. As some of you may have already heard, I am retiring at the end of December. I have tremendously enjoyed my experience here in the Ozarks and can't think of a better place to finish up what has been an amazing career with the National Park Service (NPS). I am hopeful that my influence here has been positive and am very optimistic that as we finish the first 50 years of Ozark National Scenic Riverways we are off to an excellent start to seeing our park recognized nationally for the jewel it is. There are so many exciting things beginning to happen here, and that makes my departure bittersweet.

An acting superintendent will be detailed to the Riverways while a new permanent superintendent is selected. The temporary superintendent will likely arrive near mid-January. We have also recently received notice that the new Midwest Regional Director has been selected and is expected to arrive in the spring. Cam Sholly is currently the Associate Director of Visitor and Resource Protection for the NPS. He has a diverse background in park management and proven leadership skills that will benefit the region and the Riverways. I have expressed a desire for him to visit the park soon after the new superintendent arrives so that he can gain a personal understanding of the unique resources and challenges facing the park. I encourage everyone to welcome these folks to the Riverways.

I also want to recognize several other park employees who are retiring at the end of December. "Ranger Bill" O'Donnell has been at Ozark Riverways for over 21 years, and has contributed greatly to the interpretive and educational programming offered at the park. Faye Walmsley has served as the park's energetic Chief of Interpretation for the past four years, and spent 29 years working for the NPS throughout the U.S. Richard Shockley has been part of the Riverways' staff for fourteen years and helped maintain the roads and trails throughout the park that are used by our visitors every day. Each of these employees has been a valuable member of the staff and will be sorely missed. We appreciate their efforts and personal sacrifice for the NPS mission, and wish them the best as they enter this new stage of their lives.

The new General Management Plan for the Riverways has been released to the public. You can view the plan online at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/ozarkgmp>. It was extremely important to me that we honor our commitment to release the plan in 2014. In order to do so, we published it online before we had copies available to distribute. We should have CDs available by the end of the month for anyone who would prefer to view it that way. A limited number of printed copies will be distributed to elected officials, agencies, and libraries, as well. Please contact the park if you'd like us to mail you a CD. I feel that the final GMP shows the NPS carefully considered the public feedback we received earlier in the year and that we have identified a balanced approach for protecting and enjoying these wonderful resources. It is unlikely that you will see immediate changes within the park due to the GMP. We will need to complete some additional planning and rule-making over the next couple of years, before we start to implement the proposals.

I'm happy to report that there is a good possibility the National Park Service will receive additional funds this year, based on the recently passed omnibus budget for FY2015. These funds are targeted for hiring temporary employees in recognition of the upcoming centennial anniversary of the NPS. We hope that Ozark Riverways will receive funding so that we can provide additional services to the public, over what we've been able to offer for the past several years.

In closing, I'd like to express my deepest appreciation to the NPS employees, park concessioners,  
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Ozark National Scenic Riverways preserves the free-flowing Current and Jacks Fork Rivers, the surrounding natural resources, and the unique cultural heritage of the Ozark people. For more information, visit [www.nps.gov/ozar](http://www.nps.gov/ozar) or Facebook.

### Comments? Write to:

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## Riverways Reflections (*continued*)

park stakeholders, elected officials, and just a lot of great individuals for sharing your passion for Ozark National Scenic Riverways with me. Everyone truly shares the common desire for this to be the best national park that it can be. I am grateful to the news media for helping me to share our message with the public – I have appreciated your support when you offered it and have understood when you couldn't. I will be continuing to follow the progress of the park with great interest, and I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Best wishes!

Be safe and enjoy your Ozark National Scenic Riverways!

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